

How do people face up to good and evil?

Year 9

Purpose

The aim of the project was for students in Year 9 to develop their knowledge and understanding of how human beings experience, understand and explain the nature of evil by researching first hand some religious and secular views and how these impact on people's lives. Another aim was to develop students skills as researchers and allow them to explore a variety of viewpoints. These would include a wider spectrum of people from secular and religious backgrounds than they would normally have the opportunity to engage with and the school would create a forum for students to showcase their findings.

The students' final presentation showed gains in knowledge and understanding of how people with different religious and secular world views explain and experience evil; their participation in the project has also contributed to community cohesion.

Main assessment focus

For this assessment, the focus is to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the following key concepts:

- 1.1 Beliefs, teachings and sources
- 1.3 Expressing meaning
- 1.6 Values and commitments

These foci span attainment target one; learning about religion and attainment target two; learning from religion.

This assessment would also focus on developing and assessing research skills, data compilation and analysis and the presentation of findings

Main 'Learning Outside the Classroom' Focus

The project was planned to enable students to go outside school to meet and interview members of the public and 'VIPS' from London Transport, sports managers, to watch a theatre performance of Billy Elliot and to plan a festival. Visitors from outside school were invited into meet and discuss their views with the students. Most of the outside activities took place after school or at lunchtime. Interviews were done in homes, parks and in the school playground. Some interviews were carried

out in the school boardroom and at the theatre. It is planned to organise a follow up conference with neighbouring Marshalls Park School to share experiences of being involved in the project.

School profile

Total number of learners	625
Age range	11-16 years
Specialist status	Maths and Computing College
Level 5 and above in key stage 3 tests (2007)	71%
Five A*-C at GCSE (2007)	45%
Special educational needs	11.5%

Redden Court School is an 11-16 school which has maths and computing specialist college status. It is situated between the borders of Essex and those of outer London. The school caters for students from a low income to middle income groups. Most students come from a White British background. Very few observe religious holidays. Students from other ethnic groups make up less than 3% of the school's population. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is only slightly above average but the number of students with statements of special educational needs is three times the national average.

Religious Education is a successful subject in the school and the department won a recent award from the local SACRE. The Religious Education syllabus at Key Stage three introduces students to the six major religions and two lesser known ones. It also includes a brief overview of Humanism. Religious Education lessons often have a practical dimension, including drama as well as mini religious ceremonies using key artefacts. In year seven students concentrate on the Dharmic religions; Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism and in year 8 on the Abrahamic Religions; Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In year 9 students examine big questions and responses to them. They also look at Rastafarianism and Jainism as well as Humanist views. Cross-curricular activities in Religious Education focus on charities, bullying, multi-ethnicity and war.

Havering's Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education; 'Pathways', has a strong focus on how ultimate questions and question of meaning and purpose are addressed by people from different religions and beliefs. There is a strong Humanist element in the syllabus and a Humanist representative on the SACRE.

Question 1: What were we trying to achieve?

Our aim was to ensure students understand the key concepts of good and evil. They need to examine other people's views of good and evil as well as reflect on how it affects our daily lives, the world at large, influences media and the creative arts. The priorities for the project were to allow students to explore how human beings experience, understand and explain the nature of evil. Engagement with the project enabled them to develop skills as researchers; improve literacy and ICT skills in respect investigate the effects /impact of evil on society.

What were our learners like at the start?

The students are of mixed abilities, most have very well developed oracy skills and are not afraid to express their opinions. They are extremely good at drawing from their experiences and can empathise and relate to various situations. However, they need to develop their interviewing techniques and are not competent at drawing inferences and writing reports. They need to develop their ability to apply ideas to their own and other people's lives and gain insight into religious and secular views. They also need to develop their ability to interpret and articulate responses to questions asked to the public and to religious and other leaders. An aim of the project was for students to collect first hand information from different sectors of the community which they could utilise by analysing the impact it has on communities and their lives.

What differences did we want to see in our learners?

The main priorities for our curriculum development included developing their knowledge and understanding by using and extending key concepts and vocabulary. We wanted them to be able to describe different experiences and religious reactions to evil linking it with their own and others' experiences, to be able to ask interviewees pertinent questions around the topic and identify and explain similarities and differences between secular and religious viewpoints

Another aim was the development of research skills, i.e. speaking, questioning, listening, responding, recording and reporting, using ICT equipment – devising a PowerPoint presentation, recording data, analysing and compare this data and contextually reporting on the outcome and impact on their lives as well as on others. We also wanted them to be able to reflect on their learning and be able to explain the difficulties of carrying out the tasks.

The promotion of positive attitudes and behaviour was a key dimension of the project. This included the ability to show an interest in viewpoints of other people; to be non-judgemental and critical of others viewpoints; to empathise, respect and show

an understanding of views expressed by others; to empathise with young people from less economically developed countries (LEDC) and show an understanding of how they might interpret the concepts explored. They also critically examined how some sectors of the media may capitalise on situations in order to make news sensational.

Question 2: How did we organise learning to achieve our aims?

How did we set about making a change?

The key question for our project was: What is evil? How does our understanding of the nature of evil impact on religious and secular beliefs and on responses to moral and ethical issues.

Our approach to developing new ways of engaging and motivating students included building in a range of enjoyable activities. Students enjoyed video recording interviews with members of the public – it gave them an air of importance. Meeting important figures from the community was another highlight. Video – conferencing and going as a team to a live performance was also a great motivation for them.

Students were clear about the high quality work and high standards which were expected of them in the project. They were expected to work independently as well as in collaboration with their group. A level of maturity was expected when dealing with the public and behaviour needed to be impeccable when out of school.

The project was strongly focused on the pupil rather than teacher. The teachers acted as guides and facilitators rather than as directors of the learning. The presentation questionnaires and approaches to the interviewees were all determined by the learners themselves which meant were more in control of what they were learning.

The project provided new opportunities for developing cross-curricular dimensions, skills and links with history, geography, drama and PSHE – Citizenship. It has sparked a whole school approach. Most heads of department have now decided to include cross curricular activities in the new schemes of work for September and, as a result, I have been approached by the above departments as well as music, art and science.

Question 3: How well have we achieved our aims?

What differences are evident? What impact have we made on our learners?

Initially students were hesitant and afraid of the task. They lacked the confidence in their ability to carry it through. As each different task was carried out, they became more involved; more interested and were able to see their ultimate goal being reached. They have learnt to be more tolerant and appreciative of other viewpoints. They were very committed to this project and spent many hours outside school time completing tasks. Evidence is included as one of the exemplar materials showing the effort put in by the students. For pupil engagement and participation see the group assessment, DVD, presentations and self assessment. The work will continue with two major additional aspects: an interview with a humanist and a video conferencing activity.

What evidence did we produce?

1. Scheme of work Good vs Evil.
2. Worksheet – Evil as a human being
3. Worksheet – Good and evil in fantasy
4. Worksheet – Evil – it is just of human nature
5. Starter activity – good and evil
6. Group work peer assessment
7. Mindmap for Good vs Evil
8. Mindmap for how evil might affect our daily lives
9. Mindmap for the real world
10. Assessment Sheets.
11. Pupil evaluation sheets.
12. Photographs.